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ABSTRACT

Differences in education and labor market outcomes across groups completing high school at different ages and by different means (e.g., by graduation as compared with receiving a general education development diploma) may be due to a variety of factors, including all those that influence a person to leave school early. For an early school-leaver, an estimate of the value of completing high school is the difference between outcomes of those who have either passed the General Education Development (GED) examination or gone back to school and those who have not completed high school. By 1990, young adults with a GED were more likely to have attended either a third or fourth year of high school than other dropouts. For both males and females, those who did not attain a high school diploma before age 20 did not do as well as a group in the labor market as those who did. Females who took advantage of a second chance to complete high school usually had higher annual earnings than those who did not, and those who received a diploma or GED before age 20 were more likely to be employed. Two tables and three graphs illustrate these findings and trends in employment. (SLD)

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EDUCATION AND LABOR MARKET OUTCOMES OF HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA AND GED GRADUATES

National Center for Education Statistics
Indicator of the Month, January 1994

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INDICATOR MONTH

NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS

January 1994

Education and labor market outcomes of high school diploma and GED graduates

Individuals who leave early can still complete high school, either by passing the General Education Development (GED) exam or by returning to school to complete requirements for the diploma. Differences in education and labor market outcomes across groups completing high school at different ages and by different means may be due to a variety of factors. First they can be influenced by the same characteristics, circumstances, or experiences that influence whether a person leaves school early. Second they are affected by differences in the amount and quality of the education received. For an early school-leaver, an estimate of the value of completing high school is the difference between the outcomes of those who have either passed the GED or gone back to school and those who have not completed.

- **By 1990, young adults with a GED were more likely to have attended either a third or fourth year of high school than other dropouts.**
- **For both males and females, young adults who did not attain a high school diploma before age 20 (as a group) did not do as well in the labor market as those who did attain it.**
- **Generally, females who took advantage of a second chance to complete high school had higher annual earnings than females who did not return to complete.**
- **Among young adult females, those who received a GED or high school diploma before age 20 were far more likely to be employed than those who did not complete.**

Education and labor market outcomes of 25- to 33-year-olds with no more than 2 years of college attendance, by high school completion status and age at time of completion: 1990

	Males					Females				
	Diploma before age 20	Diploma age 20 or after	GED before age 20	GED age 20 or after	Not-completed	Diploma before age 20	Diploma age 20 or after	GED before age 20	GED age 20 or after	Not-completed
Education outcomes										
Average AFQT* percentile score in 1980	45	25	40	33	20	43	22	42	30	20
Percent who attended:										
2nd year of high school	—	—	96	94	84	—	—	97	93	84
3rd year of high school	—	—	88	85	60	—	—	90	73	62
4th year of high school	—	—	74	59	34	—	—	69	53	31
1st of college	44	30	46	31	5	46	25	50	33	8
2nd year of college	18	12	15	9	1	18	5	16	9	2
Percent receiving:										
Associate's degree	5	2	5	1	0	6	3	1	0	1
Labor market outcomes										
Percent employed	94	91	83	87	86	76	63	69	64	52
Percent unemployed	4	7	7	9	7	4	9	5	9	9
Average weeks worked in 1990	48	46	36	39	41	37	29	35	30	23
Average years on current job	4	4	2	2	3	4	3	3	2	2
Median annual earnings	24,427	19,261	18,146	15,998	16,665	14,217	12,379	13,772	12,159	8,925
Percent below the poverty line	4	9	18	23	21	12	26	14	24	36

—Not applicable

*Scores on the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT). The AFQT is a general measure of ability to benefit from training and a primary criterion of enlistment eligibility for the U.S. Armed Forces.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, 1990.

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NCES 94-404

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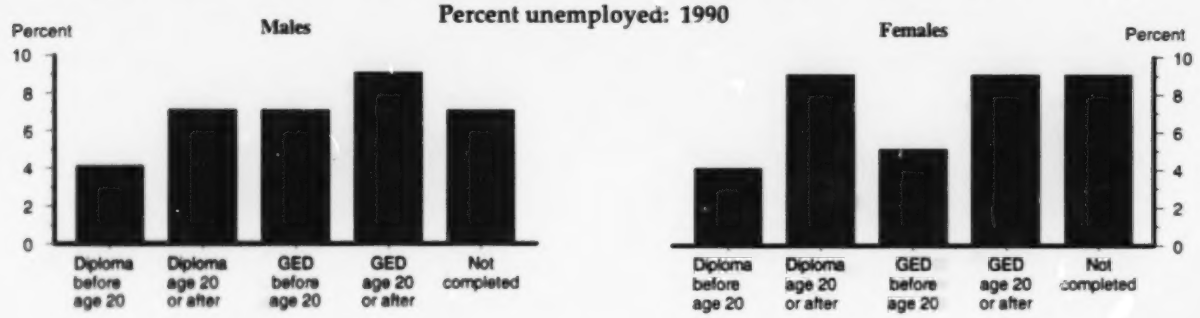
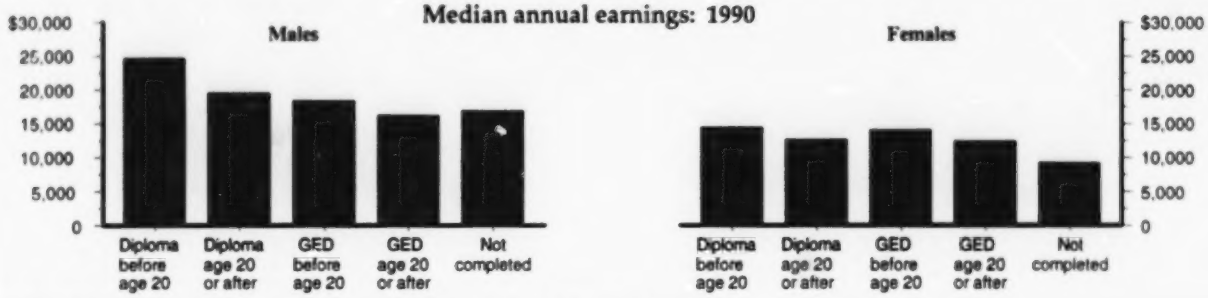
Achievement and labor market outcomes of 25- to 33- year-olds with no more than 2 years of college attendance, by high school completion status and age at time of graduation

Distribution of percentile scores on Armed Forces Qualification Test: 1980

Percent unemployed: 1990



Median annual earnings: 1990



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, 1990.

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